



# County of San Diego

## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH HAZARDOUS MATERIALS DIVISION

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## MEDICAL WASTE DISPOSAL FOR DENTAL PRACTICES

Waste from a general dental office that is regulated as medical waste is in almost all cases, limited to *sharps*. Most general dental offices generate *medical solid waste* and some offices may also generate *biohazardous waste*. Other regulated wastes, such as spent or expired chemicals, may be classified as *hazardous waste*, which is not considered medical waste.

### What types of wastes generated at a dental practice are regulated as medical waste?

*Sharps waste* and *biohazardous waste* are the two types of waste from a dental practice that must be managed as medical waste.

### What is sharps waste?

*Sharps waste* includes devices with acute rigid corners, edges, or protuberances capable of cutting or piercing, such as needles, scalpel blades, acupuncture needles, and endodontic files. Carpus contaminated with *biohazardous waste* are also included in this category.

Cal/OSHA may consider orthodontic wires to be *sharps waste*. The California Department of Health Services and County of San Diego do not regulate orthodontic wires as *sharps waste*.

### What waste from dental medicine is biohazardous waste?

*Biohazardous waste* includes waste which contains recognizable fluid blood, containers or equipment containing blood that is fluid and several other categories of waste, such as chemotherapeutic waste (trace amounts) and bacterial cultures, that are not normally generated in a general dental practice.

### How should a dental practice dispose of regulated medical waste?

There are several options for disposal of *sharps waste*:

- Disposal through a registered medical waste hauler,
- Treatment onsite by a steam autoclave prior to disposal as medical solid waste,
- Mail-in sharps disposal (sharps only),
- Use of an alternative treatment technology approved by the California Department of Health Services, such as encapsulation (this technology is approved for *sharps waste* only).

Approved alternative technologies are listed on the California Department of Health Services web page: [http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/ddwem/environmental/Med\\_Waste](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/ddwem/environmental/Med_Waste)

More information on *Medical Solid Waste* and *Hazardous Waste* is available at the Hazardous Materials Division website. Visit <http://www.sdcountry.ca.gov/deh/hmd/index.html> and look at the Medical Waste Web page under [Forms and Publications](#).

# DENTAL WASTE DISPOSAL GUIDE

*This diagram is intended as a disposal guide for some types of regulated waste.  
It is not intended to serve as a comprehensive list of all regulated wastes.*

## Regulated Medical (Sharps) Waste

Needles, blades, endodontic files, partially full carpules, carpules contaminated with biohazardous waste.

- Sharps container treated by steam autoclave.
- Sharps container disposed of via a registered medical waste hauler.
- Alternate treatment technology (e.g. encapsulation).
- Mail back sharps.



## Regulated Medical (Biohazardous) Waste

Fluid blood in IV tubing, infectious tissues, cultures.

- Red biohazard bag, stored inside a rigid container, treated by steam autoclave.
- Red biohazard bag, stored inside a rigid container, disposed of via a registered medical waste hauler.



## Regulated Medical (Biohazardous) Liquid Waste

Body fluids and liquid blood.

- Sanitary sewer system.



## Medical Solid Waste

Waste of apparent medical origin that is not regulated medical waste, such as dressings with non-liquid blood.

- Regular trash disposed in a secured dumpster or trash enclosure.



## Hazardous Waste

Iodine, lead, most cold sterilant solutions, isopropyl alcohols, cleaners that are corrosive, (with a pH  $\geq 12.5$  or  $\leq 2.0$ ).

Lead foil, sludge from silver recovery unit (waste resulting from treating X-ray fixer onsite), dental amalgam, teeth with amalgam.

- Container with a hazardous waste label, a tight fitting lid and removed off site under a manifest by a registered hazardous waste hauler.
- Store in an appropriate container and maintain records that indicate that the waste is managed by a legitimate recycler.
- If not recycled, these wastes must be stored, labeled, and disposed of as a hazardous waste, as described above.



For additional information about medical and hazardous waste contact the Hazardous Materials Duty Desk at (619) 338-2231 or visit HMD's website at <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/hmd>